

University of Wyoming College of Law

Academic Plan 2009-2014

College of Law

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Mission

The primary mission of the College of Law is to provide a high-quality legal education to its students. We also work to serve the legal profession and the public, and to enhance our own professional competence and development, through the production of high-quality legal scholarship. We also provide law-related educational and other services to the Bar, the University community and the general public.

Academic Plan 2004-2009

The College's Academic Plan for 2004-2009 concluded with thirteen action items. The College has completed or made progress on each of those items.

Increase revenues

As specified in the 2004-2009 plan, the College of Law increased tuition to a level more consistent with other public law schools in the region, although tuition continues to be lower. The increased revenue has funded a Legal Writing Director and other faculty who have expanded the curriculum, including the externship and skills curriculum. The increased revenues were also used to hire an IT staff member, fund library acquisitions, and increase student scholarships, among other things.

Smart classroom and other technological improvements

Classroom 149 now integrates classroom technology with a Symposium by Smart Technologies. Classroom 142 has most of the same technology. Classroom 144 is being renovated and will be similarly equipped. The Classroom Performance System is installed in all three of these classrooms. Classroom 149 also includes videoconferencing capabilities.

Review the curriculum

The College has appointed a Director of Legal Writing and has developed a coordinated writing program, adopted an Introduction to Law course for first-year students, and undertaken detailed curriculum assessment.

Library collection

The College has re-examined library collection development policies, substantially increased funding, and improved electronic access to materials.

Diversity among students and faculty

The College of Law has recently hired a new admissions coordinator who adds to the diversity of the staff and who will help attract and retain minority students. Faculty diversity continues to be a focus as well, and one of the recently hired faculty members is a person of color.

Expand public service opportunities for students and faculty

As planned, the College of Law reviewed and improved the externship program and now allows students to earn more externship credits per semester. The College of Law also supported the Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project as needed, and this plan includes an action item to permanently fund the Project. The new Berry Conservation Fellowships have funded summer internships for nonprofit or governmental work in the environment and natural resources area, and the Public Interest Law Fund supports summer internships for public interest work generally. The first-year orientation program now includes a community service project.

Explore the possibility of creating a Rural Law Center

The faculty has recently expressed strong support for creating the Rural Law Center, and this plan includes among the action items the establishment of the Rural Law Center.

Increase the internationalization of the law school

Two new courses, International Business Transactions and Immigration Law, add to the internationalization of the law school. One year International Human Rights Field Study, which included travel abroad, was also offered.

Improve the learning environment for students

The faculty has made some efforts to improve the learning environment by experimenting with group work and other teaching methods. The College of Law has not created small sections of required first-year courses, but plans to consider doing so as part of curricular reform.

Establish an Academic Success Center

The law school hired a director for its academic support program. The director conducts exam workshops and teaches a new first-year course, Introduction to Law, that includes fundamental exam-taking strategies. The director works intensively with students experiencing academic difficulty. Both the legal writing program and the academic support program address writing needs.

Enhance faculty scholarship

The College of Law revised its tenure and promotion policies to better describe scholarship expectations. The faculty has had some discussions of works in progress and scholarship, but should increase such efforts. Interdisciplinary scholarship has been encouraged. The law school established an institutional account for faculty submission of articles electronically through Express-O.

Address issues concerning the bar exam

The College of Law continues to seek to improve communication among law faculty, bar examiners, law students, and the bar review course providers. New ABA standards concerning bar passage rates of graduates will require gathering more data for reporting bar passage. The College also continues to consider ways to help students prepare for bar exams.

Establish a plan for assessment of student learning

The College of Law has developed a list of seven learning outcomes, conducted a curriculum mapping exercise based on the learning outcomes, and established a student learning assessment committee. The assessment committee has developed a common rubric for assessing student writing on upper class legal research papers, and is currently collecting data from faculty members on this aspect of student learning.

Institutional issues

William N. Brimmer Legal Education Center. Construction has begun on the William N. Brimmer Legal Education Center, a \$4.5 million expansion funded by private gifts and state matching funds. The Brimmer Center will add 3767 square feet to the College of Law building, featuring a multi-dimensional space that can be configured as a high-tech courtroom, a classroom, or a lecture hall seating more than 160. The new space will better prepare students for practice in modern courtrooms while also hosting actual trial and appellate proceedings, speakers, and other events. The Brimmer Center will also include a seminar room, a jury deliberation room, judges' chambers, a holding area for defendants, and a sound booth.

Library. A legislative appropriation to UW libraries will add about \$480,000 a year to the law library's current acquisitions budget of approximately \$500,000 a year. The library is investigating ways to spend this money that might least impact the current staffing levels and best improve the collection, including establishing approval plans to automatically receive and process selected law titles, increasing electronic titles or access to electronic titles, and reinstating looseleaf titles that were canceled for lack of continuation funds. The library will begin a collection assessment to assist in the purchase of materials for new areas of law to be added to the curriculum and for

strengthening the depth of current studies. Space and staffing are increased concerns because of these increases in acquisitions. The library will consider compact shelving and off-site storage options to increase space for the collection and to increase study and office space. The library will also hire additional technical services and reference staff to accommodate growing needs.

Action items

Cultivate leadership and service

Distinction in Energy, Environmental, and Natural Resources Law. Law is one of the professions critical to the region's future. The College of Law will cultivate national leadership in the important areas of environmental, natural resources, and energy law by enhancing faculty depth in those areas; developing the recently established JD-MA in Environment and Natural Resources; considering joint, graduate, and executive programs in energy, environmental, and natural resources law; and strengthening the curriculum in these areas. The College also will engage in collaborative efforts with UW's School of Energy Resources on both curriculum and outreach initiatives.

Rural Law Center. The College of Law will establish a Rural Law Center to provide service to rural communities in the state and region, and to those who practice law in such places, through outreach efforts, speakers and CLE programs, and perhaps clinical or research assistance. The Rural Law Center will also further goals to enhance student education, perhaps through course development, but also through extra-curricular opportunities that can help prepare students for rural practice and service; build a strong faculty by increasing opportunities for collaboration within the law school and across the university on matters related to rural places and issues; and develop an area of distinction for which the College of Law is naturally suited. The Center will explore potential collaborations with educational, governmental, and nonprofit agencies not only in Wyoming, but also in surrounding rural states, including the Dakotas, Idaho, Montana, and Nebraska.

Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project. The College of Law will permanently fund the Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project, a branch of the College of Law's clinical Legal Services Program. This Project provides critical legal services to low-income persons throughout the state in civil, non-fee generating cases. It thus furthers the University goal of providing leadership and service consistent with the needs of the state, while also providing students with invaluable leadership and service-learning opportunities.

Enhance curriculum

Curricular review. The College of Law will perform and implement a review of the entire curriculum. The review will include an alumni survey to help determine curricular needs. The goals of the curriculum review will be to prepare graduates to be lawyers and leaders for the 21st century, foster lifelong learning in the discipline, help students achieve the College of Law's learning outcome goals, promote our core mission of educating students for the critical profession of law, and increase focus in areas of distinction, particularly energy, environmental, and natural resources law. Among other things, the curriculum review will consider improving coverage of statutory and administrative law in the first-year curriculum, creating smaller sections in first-year and other large courses, packaging or tracking of upper class electives to provide an opportunity for advanced learning in specified subject areas, enhancing opportunities for skills and practice courses in the second and third years, offering and strengthening joint degrees and graduate programs in energy and other subjects, and offering a bar preparation course as a third-year elective.

Assessment. The College of Law will improve assessment of student learning. The College will continue to develop assessment tools for its seven learning outcomes. We will use such assessments in determining curricular and other changes needed to improve student learning.

Enhance student body

Financial assistance. The College of Law will foster excellence and promote access to legal education by increasing scholarships and graduate assistantships. Increased scholarship funds will help attract and retain students who excel; students interested in areas of distinction such as energy, environmental law, and natural resources; and students who enhance the diversity of the student body.

Recruitment. The College of Law will increase its recruitment efforts by hiring an admissions staff person and funding travel for staff and for visiting students, letters and other marketing efforts. An improved website will also help in this effort. The College will also consider early admissions, with a phase of review and acceptance in the fall.

Diversity. The College of Law will continue to seek to increase the enrollment of students who are members of groups currently underrepresented in the law school. We will especially emphasize increasing the pool of applicants from such groups by increasing and improving targeted recruitment efforts.

Strengthen faculty

Appointments. The University's planning motifs including reinforcing areas of distinction and building depth rather than breadth. The College of Law will do so by

hiring additional faculty in areas of distinction and other important areas that would benefit from added depth. Additional faculty will include an appointment to the Kepler Chair in Law and Leadership; two faculty members who concentrate on natural resources, including water law, environmental law, and energy; and a dedicated legal writing professor. Two other faculty members will be hired in other areas, which may include international law, business, intellectual property, domestic violence, and immigration.

Faculty support. The College of Law will increase faculty scholarship support, including distributing and publicizing scholarship. The College will hire visiting professors and adjuncts to replace faculty on sabbatical, and perhaps to provide occasional lightened course loads. We will also provide additional support for conferences and other travel.

Implementation

2008-2009

The College of Law community will discuss and refine the Curriculum Committee curriculum proposal; final changes will be adopted.

The administration will develop a plan for tracking bar passage rates in accordance with the new ABA interpretation.

The Curriculum Committee will develop a new assessment tool for another learning outcome, conduct data analysis and discussion regarding assessment of student writing of legal research memos, and develop any needed curriculum proposals or other changes based on this analysis.

The faculty will discuss and adopt a plan for the Rural Law Center.

The College of Law will permanently fund the Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project.

The College of Law will conduct a national search to fill open and new faculty positions.

2009-2010

The revised curriculum will be implemented.

The College of Law will review bar passage data and develop a plan to address bar passage, if needed.

The Rural Law Center will be established and a website developed.

Additional faculty members will be appointed: the Kepler Chair in Law and Leadership; two positions in natural resources, environmental law, and energy; and two other positions in areas to be determined. The College of Law will conduct a national search for a dedicated legal writing professor and any other new or open faculty positions.

The College of Law will engage in collaborative efforts with both the School of Energy Resources and the School of Environment and Natural Resources on curriculum and outreach initiatives.

2010-2011

The College of Law will add a bar preparation course as a 3L elective or other bar passage measures as needed.

The College of Law will continue to develop assessment tools on learning outcomes, report results, analyze data, and propose any needed curricular or other changes.

One or more small sections of first-year courses will be offered. The College of Law will evaluate the experience with first-year sections and consider whether and how to continue having smaller sections.

Remaining open and new faculty positions will be filled.

2011-2012

The College of Law will implement new curricular options in energy law and natural resources, including the establishment of an Energy Law/Policy LL.M. or other joint, graduate, or executive programs or institutes.